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TESTIMONY OF HOWARD J. OSBORN, ACCOMPANIED
BY JOHN W. DEBELIUS, COUNSEL

Mr. Osborn. My name is Howard J. Osborn, 1224 Mottron Drive, McLean, Virginia.

Mr. Wallach. And Counsel, would you just state your name.

Mr. Debelius. The name is John W. Debelius, 570 North Frederick Avenue, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Mr. Wallac h. Once again, Mr. Osborn, as the Senator told you, and as you have been told before, you do have the full spectrum of rights available to you here that you have under the Constitution, and in particular you do have the right to remain silent if you choose to as to any particular question. And in addition, you have the right to request that a Senator be present if you desire that one be here.

Mr. Osborn. Yes.

Mr. Wallach. Very briefly, before Mr. Rhea begins his questions, I would like to ask if Mr. Debelius is here as your personal counsel today?

Mr. Osborn. That is right.

Mr. Osborn. I take it, then that the CIA in no way secured Mr. Debelius' representation for you?

Mr. Osborn. I wish they were paying him, but they are not. I am.

Mr. Wallach. I will ask Mr. Rhea to begin his segment of the examination.

Mr. Osborn. Not to the best of my recollection.

Mr. Rhea. That is all I have. Thank you very much.

(Off the record discussion.)

Mr. Wallach. Mr. Osborn, if you would, just very briefly, on the subject matter that I am going to be directing your attention to, the mail programs, the various mail programs that you may have had knowledge of while you were with the CIA, I would like to have you very briefly trace your career for us in briefest terms with the Agency.

Mr. Osborn. All right.

I jointed the Agency on 10 October 1974.

I worked in what was then known as the Office of Collection and Dissemination, which concerned itself largely with the collection of any information that had any foreign intelligence import from other Government departments and agencies such as the Department of Commerce, the Department of Interior, the Department of the Treasury, and so forth. It was essentially a liaison job.

I served there about a year and a half, and I then jointed the Contact Division of the Office of Operations, which was concerned with the selection of foreign intelligence information from American businessmen and private organizations who had business abroad.

I served there until roughly 1950, when I jointed the Office of Special Operations, [redacted]

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[redacted]

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This division, as I recall, was the Plans Staff of the Foreign Intelligence Division of the Clandestine Services which is known as the Deputy Director of Plans, DDP.

I was promoted from that position to be Chief of the Plans Staff. I served there until 1955, roughly 1955, when I became Assistant to the Inspector General of the Agency.

I served there until 19 -- correction. I think I joined the Inspector General's staff in 1954, and I left there in late 1955 to go abroad in the position of [redacted]

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After three years in that position I served brifely for six months as [redacted].

And then 11 months as [redacted].

I left there in September 1960 to take the position of Deputy Chief of the Soviet Russian Division in the Clandestine Services of the Agency in Washington. I served in that position for about a year and a half, and then became Chief of the Soviet Russian Division. And I held that position until Septemb er of 1963, when I accepted the position of Deputy Director of the Office of Security of the Agency.

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Mr. Osborn. To the best of my recollection, I believe they were.

Mr. Wallach. Going back just a step, I take it that you had no knowledge of any mail opening projects while you were with the Inspector General's Office in 1954?

Mr. Osborn. To the best of my recollection, I don't believe I was briefed on what was then HT LINGUAL[redacted]

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Mr. Wallach. I think those just may have been different names for the same operation, different divisions.

Mr. Osborn. I think they were, yes, different code names. They changed them frequently.

Mr. Wallach. While you were in [redacted]

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Mr. Osborn. [redacted]

Mr. Wallach. Did you have knowledge of the military's mail operation over there, mail intercept operation?

Mr. Osborn. I may have had, but I can't recall it specifically.

Mr. Wallach. Did you subsequently gain knowledge of that mail intercept operation?

Mr. Osborn. I have heard of it somewhere.

Mr. Wallach. What is the nature of the operation that you have heard of?

Mr. Osborn. That the military was intercepting mail. I

don't know the details.

Mr. Wallach. Have you heard of any arrangements whereby the German authorities actually provide the mail?

Mr. Osborn. I can't recall that, honestly. I may have, but I can't recall it specifically.

Mr. Wallach. In other words, would it be fair to say that you are not familiar with that operation?

Mr. Osborn. I am not familiar at all with it.

Mr. Wallach. As I stated before, we have some documents here, and there are a couple that I think are relevant. And I would like you to review them later, but I want to get your state of recollection now. I realize that it is based on memory of events years ago, and things you read in the paper. And in no way am I questioning the truth of your memory.

Mr. Osborn. I understand.

Mr. Wallach. Could you just give us an overview of your understanding as to how the -- we will call it the New York intercept, [redacted] HT LINGUAL, whichever name you want to use, developed in the fifties?

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Mr. Osborn. I have no specific knowledge of this. It is a little unusual, but even considering that this is one of the things, of course, that we reported to Director Schlesinger, I don't believe we reported this in any detail as to how it started, because I am not really sure that any of us knew. I don't recall exactly how it did start. But it was alsways

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which time I was briefed on this particular operation.

Mr. Wallach. Did you know whether or not the Postmaster General, the then Postmaster General, I am not sure who it was in 1964, July, whoever it was in that position, had knowledge of the fact that mail was opened in New York City?

Mr. Osborn. To the best of my recollection, I never heard that he was.

Mr. Wallach. Had you ever heard either way about the Attorney General, be it Robert Kennedy or any of his predecessors?

Mr. Osborn. Not to the best of my recollection.

Mr. Wallach. When you visited New York on this inspection trip that you described being possibly with Mr. White, do you recall whether or not Mr. ~~Fabrini~~ FAVORINI accompanied you out to the facility?

Mr. Osborn. I can't recall specifically, but I am sure that he did.

Mr. Wallach. Did you actually go out to [redacted] if it was changed?

Mr. Osborn. They had changed it. It was then [redacted] it was only changed [redacted] during the last three or four years of my tenure as Director of Security. Prior to that it was right in the office.

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Mr. Dick. Were you told that it was illegal?

Mr. Osborn. No. I assumed it was. You don't open mail in peacetime.

Mr. Wallach. Did the Office of Security also run the project in Washington [redacted]

Mr. Osborn. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. Wallach. Do you have any knowledge of the project?

Mr. Osborn. We had some arrangement [redacted] And it may have been [redacted] I am not sure that it was, but we did have some arrangements [redacted] But I can't recall the details of it. But I feel sure that we did.

Mr. Wallach. [redacted]?

Mr. Osborn. The one I specifically remember was [redacted]. And I am pretty sure it was [redacted]. But I can't recall the details, I really can't. But I have a recollection of this. Ang again, we were doing it just as a mechanism again. It was the Clendestine Services that had to be calling the shot of that.

Mr. Wallach. I am just asking for the extent of your knowledge.

Mr. Osborn. And if we did it [redacted] we must have done it some other places.

Mr. Wallach. What cooperative arrangement [redacted] areyou aware of?

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Mr. Osborn. We had totally cooperative arrangement [redacted]

Mr. Wallach. With respect to mail?

Mr. Osborn. Anything.

Mr. Wallach. Could you go into that?

Mr. Osborn. I can't recall the details, but I can recall that we used to [redacted]

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Mr. Wallach. I am really just asking, not for techniques or narcotics or training or things like that we are aware of, but really with respect to [redacted] -- [redacted] could not provide in certain situations.

Mr. Osborn. I have a recollection that they did cooperate with us in this respect. And I am sorry that I can't be more clear on the details.

Mr. Wallach. Was there a particular point of contact [redacted]?

Mr. Osborn. Yes.

Mr. Wallach. Who was that?

Mr. Osborn. The point of contact that we remember the best was [redacted], that I remember.

Mr. Wallach. And how late was [redacted] there [redacted]

Mr. Osborn. He retired about two and a half years ago.

Mr. Dick. What was his position [redacted]?

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Mr. Osborn. He was a Deputy [redacted] He had a very high position [redacted] was his name.

Mr. Wallach. I note your attorney is taking notes. May I ask if those will be provided to the CIA?

Mr. Debelius. If they will be provided to the CIA it wouldn't be by me, Mr. Wallach. Really, I am doing it here to organize my own thoughts. And I would be happy to destroy them in your presence.

Mr. Wallach. I have absolutely no problem. I was just wondering if you were going under instructions.

Mr. Debelius. Could we go off the record just a moment?

Mr. Wallach. Surely.

(Off the record discussion.)

Mr. Wallach. Do you recall anybody else [redacted] that the Agency had contact with on a regular basis?

Mr. Osborn. I can't recall any other, but I am sure there were others.

Mr. Wallach. Do you recall any generic types of operations that [redacted] cooperated with?

Mr. Osborn. No. But to the best of my recollection, there was very little that we would ask [redacted] The same is true of [redacted] and many other departments.

Mr. Dick. Are you familiar with [redacted]

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operations that terminated in the mid-sixties that involved interceptions [redacted] from other countries to the US?

Mr. Osborn. I seem to have heard of this, but I can't recall it specifically. It sounds familiar to me.

Mr. Dick. Do you recall whether in any of those [redacted] programs the CIA might have received [redacted]

Mr. Osborn. Not specifically. And I can clarify one thing for you now. On this Dulles thing, I am sorry. It was not [redacted] It was [redacted] from the Soviet Union [redacted] And I seem to recall also in the same context of my discussion with you -- if you ask me specifically if I knew, I would say no, but I seem to recall that they did cooperate with us in the matter of [redacted]. I can't remember a specific instance, but I recall this.

Mr. Dick. Is that the extent of your recollection?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, really. But this [redacted] thing rings a loud bell in my mind.

Mr. Wallach. Aside from the mail opening projects which have publically come to light in recent months -- and I will go through them very briefly now -- there were the San Francisco project, which was repeated two or three times, the project in New Orleans which you have mentioned before in the

Communist China from San Francisco.

I said, does Mr. Karamessines approve this?

They said,yes.

I said, does Mr. Helms approve it -- and they said, we can assume that Mr. Karamessines has got Mr. Helms' approval.

And I said, I can't assume it. I will have to get it from him directly.

And I did. I sent one of my fellows, a senior fellow named Jack Turton. I made arrangements through Mr. Cotter, I believe, to send him out to San Francisco to talk to the Chief Postal Inspector in San Francisco, and I believe they set it up so that representatives of the Far East Division and the Technical Services Division, not the security people -- I can't recall, but I believe that they were to pose as Postal Inspectors, with access of certain categories of mail from Communist China to this country, for the purpose of photographing exteriors, examining it for possible eviddnce of censorship, but I did not know that they were going to open it, I had no idea they opened the mail. And I found out socially and personally from one of the people involved about a year ago that they opened the mail.

Mr. Wallach. Who was that from?

Mr. Osborn. A friend ofmine whowas involved, who is retired from the Agency, a fellow by the name of [redacted]

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[redacted]

Mr. Wallach. Was Mr. [redacted] actually involved in the operation?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, he was a part of it.

Mr. Wallach. Do you know Mr. [redacted]?

Mr. Osborn. I am sure there was one, but I never met anybody named [redacted].

Mr. Wallach. Are you saying, Mr. Osborn, that the operation you received approval from Mr. Helms for was not a mail opening operation?

Mr. Osborn. That is right. It was a mail cover operation.

Mr. Wallach. Would it be fair to say, then, that in gaining that approval from you you were actually misled?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, indeed -- I wasn't misled, but perhaps it seemed when I got out there and found out how easy it was to get it -- but I don't know, I wasn't told that they were to open mail. That isn't the circumstances under which I briefed Mr. Helms.

Mr. Wallach. Did you discuss this project with Mr. Cotter?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, I discussed it with him, I think, in arranging the original meeting with Mr. Turton. I don't know whether Mr. Turton went over and talked to Mr. Cotter directly, or whether Mr. Cotter just made the entre with the San Francisco

In other words, I am sure they didn't go to Mr. Cotter every time they wanted something on a day-to-day relationship.

Mr. Wallach. I have just given Mr. Osborn a copy of a memorandum dated December 24, 1974, which is in fact after the time he left on sick leave, and there is no reason to believe that he was seen it. I would just like him to review it and possibly refresh his recollection.

Off the record.

(Discussion off the record.)

Mr. WAllach. Back on the record.

I think I misspoke when I gave Mr. Osborn a memo. It is a three-page undated memo captioned "Project West Pointer." I believe it was recently prepared.

But in any event I would like to call your attention to the last paragraph on the third page which states:

"The main difference between SRPOINTER and West Pointer is that the file shows specific reference to a statement by the Postal authorities that mail not to go out of Post Office control. While mail was opened and photographed by Agency personnel in New York City under SRPOINTER, and not specific post office approval was given, neither is there written order not to do so. In West Pointer the opening of mail was contrary to specific orders that mail was not to out of post office control."

Mr. Osborn. There you are.

Mr. Wallach. Is that also your understanding, really?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, very definitely.. This fellow who is a close friend of mine -- and I don't want to necessarily put him on the spot, but he is retired and is in Florida -- came back and spent time with me at my home. And at one juncture, discussing such things as now, the Senate and the House, and what is going to happen, he said, well, you know, you remember that West Coast operation.

And I said, yes.

And he said, you didn't know we opened the mail, did you?

And I said, no, I didn't know you opened the mail. That was the first time I ever heard they opened it.

Mr. Dick. Are you referring to Mr. Kenner?

Mr. Osborn. Yes.

Mr. Dick. What division was Mr. Kenner in?

Mr. Osborn. He was with TSD at that time.

Mr. Wallach. I take it by your actions -- this might be speculation, and if you don't want to answer, feel free not to.

Mr. Osborn. If I do, I will establish that it is speculation.

Mr. Wallach. You would not have approved the West Coast operation if you knew it involved mail opening?

Mr. Osborn. I would not have approved it -- the

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Director might have approved it, but it wasn't the way I briefed it, and it wasn't my understanding with Mr. Cotter.

Mr. Wallach. In other words, you did give Mr. Cotter assurance that this was only a mail cover type of operation?

Mr. Osborn. That was the understanding I had with Mr. Cotter, to the best of my recollection.

Mr. Wallach. Have you subsequently discussed the West Coast operation with Mr. Cotter?

Mr. Osborn. Yes, I have. Since I am under oath, I had lunch with Bill Cotter and Marv Gentile on Tuesday of this week, and we naturally discussed this stuff. We went over the fact that he recalled me, and that both of us were instrumental in terminating the New York project. And I have forgotten the exact context, but the San Francisco thing came up. And I told him, I didn't even know the mail was being opened until I talked to [redacted].

He said, you didn't?

And I said, no.

He said, well, it was. He said, I just found out about it. I presume through testimony or something.

But that was the essence of my discussion.

Mr. Wallach. Did Mr. Cotter talk to you about any FBI mail opening projects?

Mr. Osborn. No, he did not. We were in a public restaurant. We doubletalked.

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you have any knowledge of it?

Mr. Osborn. The first time I ever saw the Huston Plan was in the newspapers.

Mr. Wallach. Didn't Mr. Helms know that mail was being opened in New York in 1971?

Mr. Osborn. Of course he did.

Mr. Wallach. Did you know why Mr. Helms would have asked the President for authority to open mail in 1971, then?

Mr. Osborn. I have no idea.

Mr. Wallach. Calling your attention to a memorandum dated February 16, 1973, captioned "Visit to Headquarters re SR POINTER," I will ask you to quickly read that over.

Mr. Osborn. I must have been Iden 18.

Mr. Wallach. The first question would be, do you recall a meeting in your office at which you notified Mr. Issaeff that the project would be terminated?

Mr. Osborn. I don't think I dealt with Issaeff. I think I would have dealt with one of my people. But it could have been Issaeff. I don't know. I remember suspending it.

Mr. Wallach. And do you remember telling Mr. Issaeff in words or substance that he should not tell anyone on the CI Staff that you wanted to tell the Director of the CIA Staff yourself?

Mr. Osborn. I very probably would have. I had very close relationships with Jim Angleton professionally.

memorandum from Chief, CI."

Mr. Wallach. Calling your attention to the first page, you stated this is Mr. Angleton's handwriting?

Mr. Osborn. Yes.

Mr. Wallach. I realize that most of it is illegible but I ask if you can read the line that begins with Osborn.

Mr. Osborn. "Osborn said he was under instructions from Colby to the effect that no pressure should be put on Cotter."

Mr. Wallach. Do you recall discussing that with Mr. Colby or Mr. Angleton?

Mr. Osborn. No. But I do remember talking to Bill Colby about the position that Cotter was in, and he was always extremely sympathetic. And I don't know what pressure anybody could put on Cotter.

Mr. Wallach. I believe you briefly touched on this before. How was the operation actually terminated?

Mr. Osborn. I called in Stan Ense, I believe, who was then Deputy Director of Security for Investigations and Operational Support, and I said SR POINTER is terminated as of now. I think it was in the early afternoon. And that was the end of it.

Mr. Wallach. In other words, it was then Mr. Colby under Schlesinger who terminated it?

Mr. Osborn. Yes.

Mr. Wallach. And I take it --